Implicit Bias Awareness and Cultural Competency

Chapter 3: What is Culture and Cultural Competency?

1 . Chapter Overview

As real estate professionals, it is important to understand the meaning of culture. The term culture refers to a community or group of people that have shared common experiences. These experiences shape the way they view the world. Despite how much humans have in common, cultural differences are far more prevalent than cultural universals. For example, while all cultures have language, analysis of particular language structures and conversational etiquette reveal tremendous differences. In some Middle Eastern cultures, it is common to stand close to others in conversation. North Americans keep more distance and maintain a large “personal space.”

Even something as simple as eating and drinking varies greatly from culture to culture. If you stop by the office in the morning to talk to your broker about a new listing appointment and see a mug of liquid sitting on the desk, what do you assume the broker is drinking? Here in the United States, it is probably filled with coffee, not Earl Grey tea, a favorite in England, or lassi, a popular drink in India in the summer.

Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Explain the meaning of culture.
- Differentiate between ethnocentrism and cultural relativism.
- Describe cultural competency.
- Discuss and give examples of cultural intelligence.

2 . What is Culture?

The Cambridge English Dictionary states that culture is "the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time. The English word ‘culture’ comes from a French term, which in turn derives from the Latin term ‘cult or cultus’ meaning to tend to the earth and grow, or to cultivation and nurture.

One of the problems we encounter in dealing with culture is that there are so many different meanings and definitions attached to the term.

> **Culture** is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music, and arts that are learned by socialization. In short, culture is the growth of a group identity fostered by social patterns unique to the group.
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> Anthropologist Cristina De Rossi states that, "Culture encompasses religion, food, what we wear, how we wear it, our language, marriage, music, what we believe is right or wrong, how we sit at the table, how we greet visitors, how we behave with loved ones and a million other things,"

Sociologist Henry Pratt Fairchild defined culture in his Dictionary of Sociology and Related Sciences as:

> “A collective name for all behavior patterns socially acquired and transmitted by means of symbols; hence a name for all the distinctive achievements of human groups, including not only such items as language, tool-making, industry, art, science, law, government, morals and religion, but also the material instruments or artifacts in which cultural achievements are embodied and by which intellectual cultural features are given practical effect, such as buildings, tools, machines, communication devices, art objects, etc.”

3 . Aspects of Culture

When describing culture, Dr. Fairchild mentions the following aspects that are typical of most definitions of culture.

- **Behavior Patterns**. We are talking about codes and patterns of behavior here that are found in groups of people.
- **Socially Acquired**. We are taught these behavior patterns as we grow up in a family in some geographical location and are profoundly affected by the family we are born into, its religion, and all kinds of other matters.
- **Distinctive Achievements of Human Groups**. It is in groups that we become human and become enculturated or acculturated (two words for the same thing, for all practical purposes). We have our own distinctive natures, but we are also part of society.
- **Artifacts in Which Cultural Achievements Are Embodied**. The artifacts we are talking about here are the popular culture texts carried in the various media and other non-mediated aspects of popular culture (or not directly mediated) such as fashions in clothes, food preferences, artifacts (what anthropologists call 'material culture'), language use, sexual practices, and related matters.

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4 . Elements of Culture

Elements of culture include values, beliefs, norms, symbols, and language. The most important elements of culture may be values and beliefs.

Values are a culture's standard for understanding what is good for society and vary from culture to culture. Values are the basis for a culture's beliefs. **Beliefs** are the principles that people hold to be true.

Norms describe how people are expected to behave in certain situations. They are the visible and invisible rules of conduct through which societies are structured.

Symbols (gestures, signs, objects, signals, and words) help people navigate their environment. For example, because of common usage, stick figures on bathroom doors and traffic signs are taken for granted.

Language is a symbolic system through which people communicate and through which culture is transmitted. As society changes, language changes to express new ideas and concepts. Nonverbal communication is symbolic, and, as in the case of language, much of it is learned through one's culture. Some expressions are universal such as smiling or crying. However, some nonverbal gestures have different meanings in diverse cultures. For example, in many cultures a thumbs-up indicates that something is good or well done., but it is an offensive insult in other countries like Italy, Greece, Iran, and Australia.

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5 . Cultural Quiz

No matter where you live, you are working with and building relationships with people of various backgrounds and cultures. Take this quiz to evaluate your knowledge of diverse cultures.

Using your course Notes or a piece of paper, write your answers to the following questions. Match the term on the left with the correct definition from the column on the right. When finished, advance to the next screen to see the answers.

1. Hijab	A. A dish of coarsely ground corn kernels popular in the Southern United States.
2. Torah	B. A secular holiday celebrated by African Americans December 26 - January 1.
3. Dreidel	C. A traditional spring holiday in many cultures that is celebrated on May 1.
4. Lederhosen	D. A thin pancake that originated in France.
5. Grits	E. A Muslim place of worship.
6. Ramadan	F. In England, the part of the car we refer to as the "trunk."
7. Mosque	G. In Judaism, the first 5 books of the Hebrew scripture.
8. Kwanzaa	H. Muslim Holy Day.
9. Thumbs Up	I. A Jewish 4-sided spinning top.
10. Alcohol	J. The German name for soccer
11. Fridays	K. A traditional scarf worn by Muslim women.
12. Crepe	L. German pork Sausage.

13. May Day	M. The 9th month of the Muslim year, during which strict fasting is observed.
14. Fussball	N. Not consumed by Mormons or Muslims.
15. Boot	O. Possibly an offensive gesture in Afghanistan, Iran, and parts of Italy.
16. Bratwurst	P. Leather shorts with H shaped suspenders traditionally worn in Bavaria.

6 . Cultural Quiz Answers

Hijab = A traditional scarf worn by Muslim women

Torah = In Judaism, the first 5 books of the Hebrew scripture

Dreidel = A Jewish 4-sided spinning top

Lederhosen = Leather shorts with H shaped suspenders traditionally worn in Bavaria

Grits = A dish of coarsely ground corn kernels with Native American origins and popular in the Southern United States

Ramadan = The 9th month of the Muslim year, during which strict fasting is observed

Mosque = A Muslim place of worship

Kwanzaa = A secular holiday celebrated by African Americans December 26 - January 1

Thumbs Up = Possibly an offensive gesture in Afghanistan, Iran, and parts of Italy

Alcohol = Not consumed by Mormons or Muslims

Fridays = Muslim Holy Day

Crepe = A thin pancake that originated in France

May Day = A traditional spring holiday in many cultures that is celebrated on May 1

Fussball = The German name for soccer

Boot = In England, the part of the car we refer to as the “trunk”

Bratwurst = German pork Sausage

7 . Levels of Culture

Culture differs from country to country because culture is based on the interaction of people operating in a local, regional, or national environment. Culture is learned and acquired from family members, from the group and the society in which they live. Consequently, the people of any area are characterized by their distinctive cultural traditions. When people interact with people from diverse cultures, they become more aware of each other’s cultures.

Sociologists and anthropologists typically like to group and categorize things. The concept of culture typically is described as three layers or levels of culture: international, national, and subculture. These generalizations about layers of culture tend to lead to stereotype groups of people. These generalizations merely serve as a starting point in describing a culture.

8 . International Culture

International culture refers to cultural traits that extend beyond national boundaries. It is not confined to a country or even a continent. These cultural traits and patterns spread through diffusion, migration, colonization, and globalization (Kottak and Kozaitis 2012). Because of this international culture is sometimes referred to as universal. **Cultural universals** are patterns or traits that are globally common to all societies. Examples of universal activities include courtship, marriage, division of labor, status differences, music,

and language, which are the aspects of human life that are expected from everyone, no matter the culture.

The family unit is an example of a cultural universal although, how that family unit is defined and how it functions vary. In many Asian cultures, family members from all generations commonly live together in one household. In these cultures, young adults continue to live in the extended household family structure until they marry and join their spouse's household, or they may remain and raise their nuclear family within the extended family's homestead. In the United States, by contrast, individuals are expected to leave home and live independently for a period before forming a family unit that consists of parents and their offspring.

9 . International Culture (cont.)

Marriage is another cultural universal because all cultures have some type of marriage even though the process and ceremony is different. For example, in the United States, people tend to view marriage as a choice between two people, based on mutual feelings of love. In other nations and in other times, marriages have been arranged through an intricate process of interviews and negotiations between entire families. To someone raised in the United States, arranged marriages may seem strange or even wrong. Conversely, someone whose marriage was arranged might be perplexed with the idea of people choosing their own spouse without guidance from others. In both cases, a person from one culture may have misconceptions about the customs of the other. In other words, the way in which people view marriage depends largely on what they have been taught.

Computers and mobile devices are examples of international culture because they allow people to live and operate across national boundaries enabling them to create and sustain an international culture around a common interest or purpose (i.e., sports, music, fashion, etc.).

International culture is regionalized under broad the umbrellas of Western culture, Asian culture, Latin culture, Middle-Eastern culture, and African culture.

10 . International: Western Culture

The term 'Western culture' describes the culture of European countries as well as those that have been influenced by European immigration, such as the United States. Canada, and Australia. Western culture has been developing and changing for over 2,500 years and has its roots in the Classical Period of the Greco-Roman era (the fourth and fifth centuries B.C.) and the rise of Christianity.in the 14th century. Other people that influenced Western culture include Latin, Celtic, Germanic, and Hellenic (Greek) ethnic and linguistic groups.

With the collapse of the Roman Empire (about A.D. 476), Europe became comprised of several warring states, each with their own cultures. During the Middle Ages, Christianity became the dominant religion. In fact, "the notion of "Europe" and the "Western World" has been intimately connected with the concept of "Christendom", and many even consider Christianity as the unifying belief that created a European identity. [Dawson, Christopher; Glenn Olsen (1961). Crisis in Western Education (reprint ed.). p. 108. ISBN 9780813216836.].

When the land trade routes to the East were disrupted, England, Spain, and Portugal commissioned explorers to find new sea routes to Asia, which was the source of spices and luxury goods. The early explorations, eventually led to the settlement of Europeans into North and South America.

Today, the influences of Western culture can be seen in almost every country in the world.

11 . International: Asian Culture

The term 'Asian culture' describes the culture and the societal norms of countries in Eastern Asia (including China, Japan, Vietnam, North Korea, and South Korea) and the Indian subcontinent. Similar to the development of Western culture, Asian culture was heavily influenced by religion during its early development. Additionally, it was also heavily influenced by the large-scale growth and harvesting of rice, which required interdependence

among the members of the society. Rice farming influenced festivals, customs, proverbs. and the overall structure of language, all of which would have led Asians to develop an interdependent cultural psychology.

The Asian culture umbrella covers a huge range of traditions and histories. For example, Buddhism originated in India, but it was largely overtaken by Hinduism after the 12th century. As a result, Hinduism became a major driver of culture in India, while Buddhism continued to exert influence in China and Japan. The preexisting cultural ideas in these areas also influenced religion. For example, Chinese Buddhism borrowed from the philosophy of Taoism, which emphasizes compassion, frugality, and humility. [Early Buddhism and Taoism in China, Jiahe Liu and Dongfang Shao].

Many centuries of peaceful and aggressive interactions in this region have led to these cultures influencing each other either positively or negatively.

For example, relations between South Korea and Japan are sometimes strained due to the Japanese occupation and annexation of Korea in 1910. History.com has an excellent discussion of this.

Click and open the Japan-Korea Conflict. After reviewing, return to your course.

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12 . International: Latin Culture

Many historians think that French geographers used the term "Latin America" to differentiate between English and Latin-based (Spanish and Portuguese) languages.

The geographic region encompassing "Latin culture" is huge. Latin America is typically described as Mexico, Central America, the entire continent of South America, and the islands of the Caribbean where Spanish or Portuguese are the dominant languages. Because these areas comprise over twenty countries, Latin cultures are incredibly diverse. Many blend Indigenous traditions with the Spanish/Portuguese languages and Catholicism brought by Spanish and Portuguese colonizers.

Additionally, Brazilian, and Caribbean cultures were influenced by African culture. From samba and carnival to food, music and religion, African culture is everywhere in Brazil. The cultural heritage stems from the estimated four million slaves who were brought to the country over a 300-year period, at least four times as many as to the United States.

Another example is the Mexican celebration of Día de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead, a holiday dedicated to remembering the departed that is celebrated on Nov. 1 and Nov. 2. Dia de los Muertos was celebrated long before the arrival of the Spanish colonizers. However, the celebration was merged with the Catholic All Saints Day and moved to its current date. The holiday is now well-known in the United States because Mexican immigrants brought the holiday with them.

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13 . International: Middle Eastern Culture

Some of the world’s oldest civilizations were connected with parts of today’s Middle East. These include the Sumerian, Egyptian, Assyrian, and Babylonian civilizations. Today, the Middle East encompasses the Arabian peninsula as well as the eastern Mediterranean and North Africa. They are Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. The Middle East has been referred to as the crossroads of the world because it connects the three continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe.

The term "Middle Eastern culture" is another umbrella that encompasses a huge diversity of cultural practices, religious beliefs, and daily habits. The Middle East is composed of people from many ethnicities, including Arabs, Persians, Turks, Kurds, and Armenians.

The region is the birthplace of the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) and is home to dozens of languages, from Arabic to Hebrew to Turkish to Pashto. Arabic is the most commonly spoken language in the Middle East. It is the official language of more than twenty countries and is spoken by approximately 300 million people worldwide. While there is significant religious diversity in the Middle East, the predominant religion by numbers is Islam, and Islam has played a large role in the cultural development of the region.

14 . International: Middle Eastern Culture (cont.)

From 711 to 1492, modern day Spain and Portugal was known as al-Andalus and was under Muslim rule. During that time, al Aldalus, with its capital in Cordoba became a world center of science, medicine, philosophy, and invention. Scientists made great contributions to science and launched entirely new fields of study, especially in algebra, chemistry, medicine, trigonometry, optics, and astronomy. Many English words are derived from Arabic, especially words that relate to science, which indicates that Europeans heavily borrowed from Middle Eastern scientists in the Middle Ages. Borrowed words include alcohol, algebra, alkali, almanac, amalgam, chemistry, elixir, lemon, magazine, sodium, zero, tobacco, guitar, and traffic.

Middle Eastern culture has also been shaped by the Ottoman Empire, which ruled a U-shaped ring around the eastern Mediterranean between the 14th and early 20th centuries. Areas that were part of the Ottoman Empire are known for distinctive architecture drawn from Persian and Islamic influences.

15 . International: African Culture

Africa has the longest history of human habitation of any continent. According to Tom White of the London Natural History Museum in London, humans originated there and began to migrate to other areas of the world around 400,000 years ago.

African culture varies not only between national boundaries, but within them. One of the key features of this culture is the large number of ethnic groups throughout the fifty-four countries on the continent. The knowledge of most of the individual languages of Africa is still very incomplete, but there are known to be in excess of 1,500 distinct languages.

For example, Lize Okoh writing for Culture Trip states that Nigeria alone has more than three hundred ethnic tribes and is the most diverse nation in modern Africa. The southwest area of Nigeria has always been dominated by the Yoruba people, descendants of the Oyo Empire, while the southeast has always been dominated by the Igbo people from the Nri Kingdom. Most of the north is inhabited by the Hausa and Fulani people who are descendants of the Hausa Kingdom, Fulani Empire and Songhai Empire. The Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo tribes are the three major tribes in Nigeria. However, there exists a large number of other tribes with over 520 languages.

16 . International: African Culture (cont.)

Africa has imported and exported its culture for centuries; East African trading ports were a crucial link between East and West as early as the seventh century. This led to complex urban centers along the eastern coast, often connected by the movement of raw materials and goods from landlocked parts of the continent.

It would be impossible to characterize all of African culture with one description. Northwest Africa has strong ties to the Middle East, while Sub-Saharan Africa shares historical, physical, and social characteristics that are very different from North Africa. Some traditional Sub-Saharan African cultures include the Maasai of Tanzania and Kenya, the Zulu of South Africa, and the Batwa of Central Africa. The traditions of these cultures evolved in very different environments. The Batwa, for example, are one of a group of ethnicities that traditionally live a forager lifestyle in the rainforest. The Maasai, on the other hand, herd sheep and goats on the open range.

17 . National Culture

National culture is the beliefs, practices, behavior patterns, values, cultural traits, and institutions shared by people in the same nation. National culture is the body of cultural traditions that distinguish a specific society. When people speak of American, Egyptian, Japanese, Peruvian, Polish, Samoan, or Ugandan culture, they are referring to the shared language, traditions, and beliefs that set each of these peoples apart from others. Usually,

people share a culture because they acquired it as they were raised by their parents and other family members.

Usually, National culture is recognizable by its symbols (flags, logos, and colors) as well as sound including national anthems and musical styles. Do not automatically assume that everyone in a large multicultural country like the United States shares a common culture. Generally, most people could agree on some core values on some level. **Core values** are the basic values of a culture and help to distinguish it from others. However, it is important to remember, when speaking of national culture that all members within that society may not agree with all of the core values.

In his 2003 essay "American Values and Assumptions", Gary Althen identifies some American core values such as individualism, freedom, equality, competitiveness, privacy, achievement, and work. Whereas Japanese culture stresses different core values such as belonging, harmony, group orientation (interdependence over independence), politeness, modesty, gentleness, patience, and formality.

The national culture includes **popular culture**, which refers to the pattern of cultural experiences and attitudes that exist in mainstream society. Popular culture events might include parades, the World Series, baseball game, or blockbuster movies. Popular music, which changes with every generation, is part of popular culture. Popular culture is often expressed and spread via the internet and commercial media such as television (live broadcast and streaming), radio, movies, and corporate-run websites.

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18 . Subcultures

Subcultures are smaller groups of people who share cultural traits and patterns, but they are a part of the larger society or cultural system. Subcultures have their own set of symbols, meanings, and behavioral norms. Subcultures develop their own self-culture that has significant meaning to members of the group and creates social boundaries for membership and social acceptance. Thousands of subcultures exist within the United States. Ethnic, racial groups, and geographic regions share the language or dialect, food, and customs of their heritage. The shared cultural traits of subcultures set them apart from the rest of their society.

Examples of easily identifiable subcultures in the United States include ethnic groups such as Filipino Americans and Mexican Americans. Members of each of these subcultures share a common identity, food tradition, dialect or language, and other cultural traits that come from their common ancestral background and experience. As the cultural differences between members of a subculture and the dominant national culture blur and eventually disappear, the subculture ceases to exist except as a group of people who claim a common ancestry. That is generally the case with German Americans and Irish Americans in the United States today. Most of them identify themselves as Americans first. They also see themselves as being part of the cultural mainstream of the nation.

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19 . Subcultures (cont.)

Other subcultures are united by shared experiences. Biker culture revolves around a dedication to motorcycles. Some subcultures are formed by members who possess traits or preferences that differ from the majority of a society's population. The body modification community embraces aesthetical additions to the human body, such as tattoos, piercings, and certain forms of plastic surgery. In the United States, adolescents often form subcultures to develop a shared youth identity. Alcoholics Anonymous offers support to those suffering from alcoholism. But even as members of a subculture band together, they still identify with and participate in the larger society.

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20 . Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism

Every culture has succeeded as a system for human survival. No culture can be judged as evolutionary superior to another, and cultural features can only be understood in terms of their role in the complete system.

Ethnocentrism is a belief in the superiority of your own culture. However, when we do not appreciate the diversity of other cultures, we are limited to interpreting the world narrowly

through our own cultural filter, which determines what is true and right for us. Any variations are deemed bizarre, wrong, or inferior.

The opposite of ethnocentrism is cultural relativism: the judging of cultural elements relative to their cultural context. We are less likely to interpret differences as bizarre, offensive, or deficient if we consider them in terms of their own cultural context.

21 . Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism is the tendency to view your own society or culture as superior and the standard by which other societies and cultures are judged. Simply put, ethnocentrism is a belief in the superiority of your own race, ethnic, or cultural group. There is great variation among the cultural norms of different social groups. When we do not appreciate the diversity of cultural norms, we are limited to interpreting the world narrowly through our own cultural filter. Our cultural code defines our reality and determines what is true and right for us. Any variations are deemed bizarre, wrong, or inferior, creating cultural blind spots.

Ethnocentrism is not a new concept.

> "For if one were to offer men to choose out of all the customs in the world such as seemed to them the best, they would examine the whole number, and end by preferring their own; so convinced are they that their own usages far surpass those of all others" -- Herodotus, The Histories, 420 BC

22 . Ethnocentrism (cont.)

A high level of appreciation for one's own culture can be healthy; a shared sense of community pride, for example, connects people in a society. But ethnocentrism can lead to disdain or dislike for other cultures and could cause misunderstanding and conflict. For example, people in the United States may express disgust at other cultures' cuisine and think that it's disgusting to eat meat from a dog or guinea pig. But they don't question their own habit of eating beef or pork, which dietary laws may prohibit Hindus, Muslims, and Jews from eating. Fifty years ago, the idea of consuming raw fish such as sushi was appalling to most westerners.

Ethnocentrism often leads to incorrect assumptions about others' behavior based on your own norms, values, and beliefs. In extreme cases, a group of individuals may see another culture as wrong or immoral and because of this may try to convert, sometimes forcibly, the group to their own ways of living. Unfortunately, war could be the devastating result if a group is unwilling to change its way of living or cultural practices.

23 . Ethnocentrism (cont.)

When ethnocentrism is taken to the extreme it can become cultural imperialism. Sometimes people with the best intentions go to a country to "help" its people, because they see them as uneducated or backward, i.e., inferior. Actually, they are guilty of cultural imperialism, which is the deliberate imposition of one's own cultural values onto another culture.

> Early in the sixteenth century, Europe began its period of exploration and colonization. The motivations for colonial expansion can be summed up as God, Gold, and Glory. God, because missionaries felt it was their moral duty to spread Christianity, and they believed a higher power would reward them for saving the souls of colonial subjects. Gold, because colonizers would exploit resources of other countries in order to bolster their own economies. Glory because European nations competed with one another over the glory of attaining the greatest number of colonies. European colonizers often viewed the people in the lands they colonized as uncultured savages desperately in need of European governance, dress, religion, and other cultural practices.

24 . Ethnocentrism (cont.)

A more modern example of cultural imperialism is a demand for American goods and services in other parts of the world. This “Americanization” of other cultures is said to occur when the mass exportation of American films, music, clothing, and food into other countries threatens to replace local products and to alter or extinguish features of the traditional way of life. However, in this instance, the people in the other countries are voluntarily embracing the culture, instead of it being forced upon them involuntarily. This this is referred to by some people as imperial globalism.

Sometimes, ethnocentrism is not avoidable. Even if have involuntary negative reactions (based on our implicit biases) toward another person or culture’s practices or beliefs, it does not have to end up in conflict. In order to avoid controversy over culture practices and beliefs, we should “agree to disagree” and treat each other civilly.

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25 . Cultural Relativism

Cultural relativism is in contrast with ethnocentrism. **Cultural relativism** is the principle of regarding and valuing the practices of a culture from the point of view of that culture and to avoid making hasty judgments.

When driving, which side of the road is correct? Of course, the right side…unless you’re from England and are used to driving on the “wrong” side of the road. Possibly it is not “wrong” it is just the “other” side. This is an example of **cultural relativism**, which is the practice of assessing a culture by its own standards rather than viewing it through the lens of one’s own culture.

When we recognize that the many cultures of the world have their own beliefs, values, and practices that have developed in particular historical, political, social, material, and ecological contexts and that it makes sense that they would differ from our own and that none are necessarily right or wrong, or good or bad, then we are engaging the concept of cultural relativism. Cultural relativism encourages respect for diverse cultural values, beliefs, and practices.

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26 . Cultural Relativism (cont.)

For example, it is a common practice of men in Saudi Arabia to walk in public while holding hands, with no sexual undertones. This is a common behavior and a sign of connectedness between two people. "Holding hands is the warmest expression of affection between men," said Samir Khalaf, a sociology professor at American University of Beirut in Lebanon, said "Holding hands is the warmest expression of affection between men. It's a sign of solidarity and kinship. In fact, if a man chooses not to touch another in a greeting, it can be interpreted as a sign of distance or disdain.” In Arab countries, kissing cheeks, long handshakes and clutching hands are meant to reflect amity, devotion and most important, equality in status. Strangers do not kiss or hold hands, and the strong do not kiss the weak.” {Fuad Ishak Khuri, in his book, "The Body in Islamic Culture" (2001)]. By contrast, in America holding hands is largely limited to romantically involved couples, and often suggests a sexual relationship.

These are simply two different ways of understanding the meaning of holding hands. Someone who does not take a relativistic view might be tempted to see their own understanding of this behavior as superior and, perhaps, the foreign practice as being immoral.

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27 . Cultural Relativism (cont.)

Despite the fact that cultural relativism promotes the appreciation for cultural differences, it can also be problematic. Critics argue that cultural relativism discourages cross-cultural criticism, rejects universal morality, and sanctions human-rights abuses and terrorism. At its most extreme, cultural relativism leaves no room for criticism of other cultures, even if certain cultural practices are horrific or harmful. Many practices have drawn criticism over the years. When considering harmful cultural traditions, it can be patronizing to use cultural relativism as an excuse for avoiding debate. To assume that people from other cultures are

neither mature enough nor responsible enough to consider criticism from the outside is demeaning.

28 . Cultural Change

Groups of people develop distinct patterns of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors as they respond to the survival challenges of their shared environment. Culture is flexible and has helped human beings adapt and survive in nearly every socioecological environment on the planet. No matter what a culture looks like, one thing is for certain: cultures evolve and change.

> "Culture appears to have become key in our interconnected world, which is made up of so many ethnically diverse societies, but also riddled by conflicts associated with religion, ethnicity, ethical beliefs, and, essentially, the elements which make up culture," De Rossi said. "But culture is no longer fixed if it ever was. It is essentially fluid and constantly in motion."

Cultures change when innovations open up new ways of living and when new ideas enter a culture as a result of travel or globalization.

29 . Cultural Change: Innovation

An **innovation** refers to the initial appearance of a markedly new object or concept in society. The two ways to come across an innovative object or idea is to discover or invent it. **Discovery** is the act of finding something that exists but that had not been known before. For example, the discovery of gold in California in 1848 was instrumental in opening up the west. In 1610, when Galileo looked through his telescope and discovered Saturn, the planet was already there, but at that time, no one had known about it.

An **invention** is the result of creating something new from existing objects or concepts. During the late 1800s and the early years of the 1900s, inventions came at an astonishing pace. Cars, airplanes, vacuum cleaners, lamps, radios, telephones, and even televisions were all new inventions. These inventions and others helped shape cultural values, and often required new norms for new situations. For example, with the pervasive use of cell phones in public places, people became annoyed by listening to loud one-sided conversations and pushed for new social norms for cell phone use. Fortunately, texting created a solution because it enables quiet communication. Texting has surpassed phoning as the chief way to meet today's highly valued ability to stay in touch anywhere, everywhere.

Innovations and inventions can cause generational but cultural gaps. Sociologist William F. Ogburn coined the term **culture lag** to refer to this time that elapses between the introduction of a new item and its general acceptance as part of the culture.

30 . Cultural Change: Globalization and Diffusion

Beginning in the 1980s, many U.S. companies set up offices in other nations where the costs of resources and labor are cheaper. As a result, international trade and finance markets were integrated and markets became dominated by multinational companies. This is called globalization. Improved communications have further opened doors for international business relations, accelerating the flow of goods and information.

Diffusion is the spread of cultural ideas. **Globalization** refers to the integration of markets and diffusion relates to a similar process in the integration of international cultures. Middle-class Americans can fly overseas and return with a new appreciation of Thai noodles or Italian gelato. Access to television and the Internet has brought the lifestyles and values portrayed in U.S. sitcoms into homes around the globe. Twitter feeds from public demonstrations in one nation have encouraged political protesters in other countries. When this kind of diffusion occurs, objects and ideas from one culture are quickly introduced into another.

31 . Cultural Appropriation

Oxford Reference Dictionary describes **cultural appropriation** as: "A term used to describe the act of taking over of creative or artistic forms, themes, or practices by one cultural group from another."

An example might be a person (Native American or not) who has NOT earned the right to wear an eagle feather headdress to wear one as a fashion accessory. For example, Victoria's Secret was heavily criticized in 2012 after putting a model in a headdress reminiscent of a Lakota war bonnet These headdresses are laden with meaningful symbolism, and wearing one was a privilege earned by chieftains or warriors through acts of bravery. The model also wore turquoise jewelry inspired by designs used by Zuni, Navajo, and Hopi tribes in the desert Southwest, illustrating how cultural appropriation can lump together tribes with quite diverse cultures and histories into one stereotyped image.

More recently, in 2019, Gucci faced a similar backlash for selling an item named "the Indy full turban" which caused considerable anger from the Sikh community. Harjinder Singh Kukreja, a Sikh restaurateur and influencer, wrote to Gucci on Twitter, stating: "the Sikh Turban is not a hot new accessory for white models but an article of faith for practicing Sikhs. Your models have used Turbans as ‘hats’ whereas practicing Sikhs tie them neatly fold-by-fold. Using fake Sikhs/Turbans is worse than selling fake Gucci products."

32 . Cultural Appropriation (cont.)

People should respect another culture’s sacred or meaningful symbols or practices. However, the concept of cultural appropriation can be taken to extremes. For example, people in many cultures over the millennia have worn braids in their hair. People often did it to protect their hair or to keep the hair out of the way. In the fifth century Greek maidens wore extremely fine braids, Romans created elaborate braided hairstyles that were set with beeswax, and even the Vikings braided their hair before they went into battle. Braiding is really just intertwining and weaving three strands of hair. The main difference between French braids and cornrows (boxer braids) is that you braid the cross sections under, not over, to make them pop off the head. Some things, like braids, are universal to all cultures.

Can you imagine only eating the foods or listening to music of your own culture? How boring. What would be the point of travel? America is known as the cultural melting pot to describe the cultural integration of immigrants to the United States. An appropriate example of cultural integration might be our traditional, beautifully, decorated Christmas trees that we see everywhere during December. Well, Christmas trees originated in Germany in the 16th century and first appeared in North America in 1781 when Hessian soldiers put up a tree to celebrate Christmas. During the early 1800s, Christmas trees became commonplace in America.

33 . Cultural Appropriation (cont.)

If we follow the idea of cultural appropriation to an unreasonable conclusion, then only Germans and Americans of German descent could wear any type of blue jeans and only Americans of German or Serbian descent could enjoy the benefits of electricity.

> Levi Strauss was a German-born American businessman who founded the first company to manufacture blue jeans and he obtained a patent for Levi work pants. George Westinghouse (Westinhausen) was a German-American entrepreneur, inventor, and engineer known for developing the alternating current (AC) electricity supply system. Nikola Tesla was a Serbian-American inventor and electrical engineer best known for his contributions to the design of the AC system along with George Westinghouse.

The line between what differentiates cultural appropriation from cultural appreciation can be controversial. Some say appropriation doesn't exist because no culture is completely original and uninfluenced by any other. Some people think they have the right to wear whatever they want so long it doesn’t offend anybody, while others think that other people’s cultural elements shouldn’t be used by anyone else other than the members of that specific culture.

34 . What is Cultural Competency?

The term, “cultural competency” is a term that is used in many industries. There is no one definition of cultural competence. Various federal and state agencies, companies, associations, and academia have developed a definition of cultural competence that meets their institution’s needs. In 1989, Terry Cross and others developed a definition of cultural competence that has been widely adapted and modified by other groups.

> **Cultural competence** is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency, or those professions to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.
>
> The word **culture** is used because it implies the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group. The word **competence** is used because it implies having the capacity to function effectively. [Cross et al, 1989]

The concept of **cross-cultural relationship** is the idea that people from diverse cultures can have relationships that acknowledge, respect, and begin to understand each other’s diverse lives. People with different backgrounds can help each other see possibilities that they never thought were there because of limitations, or cultural prohibitions, posed by their own traditions. Becoming aware of these new possibilities will ultimately change the people who are exposed to the new ideas. You may live in a neighborhood with people from other countries. All the children in the neighborhood attend the same schools and neighbors pick up the local culture. As cultures blend with other cultures, they change over time to form new ones.

35 . Cultural Competency (cont.)

Learning about and understanding other cultures is a two-way street. Your own cultural background (i.e., implicit biases) plays a role in how you relate to other cultures, and how people in those cultures relate to you.

There is no magic bullet to cultural competency because there are hundreds of cultures and subcultures in this world. However, you can be open to learning about other cultures and be respectful of cultural diversity.

There are four aspects that help develop cultural competency.

- **Your awareness** of your own view of the cultural world.
- **Your attitude** toward difference between cultures.
- **Your knowledge** of diverse cultural beliefs, views, and practices.
- **Your skills** in dealing with the differences between diverse cultures and with their inter-relationships

Click and open the Cultural Competence Continuum. After reviewing, return to your course.

36 . What is Cancel Culture?

The phenomena of “cancel culture” is the antithesis of cultural competency. Cultural competence requires individuals and institutions to value diversity and manage the dynamics of difference.

Whereas cancel culture promotes the “canceling” of people, brands, TV shows and movies, and even children’s books due to what some consider political correctness to be offensive or problematic remarks or ideologies.

Depending on who you ask, cancel culture:

- has little to no effect on the canceled.
- ruins lives.
- is a threat to free speech.
- is just speech holding others accountable.

Unfortunately, online culture often leaves no room for nuance. People quickly unleash mobs of online attacks on people who they feel did wrong and "cancel" them, rather like an unthinking killer bee swarm, often without having all the context or taking the time to discover the full story. How much actual information can be conveyed in 280-character tweet? Wonder what the last lemming was thinking as it followed the others off the cliff.

37 . Cultural Intelligence

Today's brokerages are more multicultural than ever, and it's normal to work with people from many different places and backgrounds. However, cultural differences are not just about nationality, ethnicity, or belief. Many of us work with younger or older clients who have cultural references, assumptions and attitudes that are quite different from our own.

People with cultural competence exhibit a high level of cultural intelligence. **Cultural Intelligence**, also known as “CQ” for cultural quotient, refers to the skill to relate and work effectively in culturally diverse situations.

People with cultural intelligence are not simply aware of diverse cultures, they are able to work and relate with people across a variety of cultural contexts. People with high cultural intelligence are attuned to the values, beliefs, and styles of communication of people from diverse cultures. Cultural intelligence is an individual’s ability to vary communication styles depending on the culture and environment in which they are operating. It’s an understanding that others may have different styles, approaches, or even attitudes depending on their cultural background. These differences vary from proper styles of address to meeting with clients.

However, many times, you may not be aware you’re making a cultural blunder. For example, you are meeting with a new client who is a recent immigrant from Korea and happen to be taking notes with a red pen, which seems to be making the client nervous. Unbeknownst to you, tradition there says a person whose name is written in red ink is about to die.

On the other hand, many American habits and customs strike other cultures as strange. For example, you have a 10:00 am appointment to show your client from Korea a property. (This time, no red pen.). Again, the client shows up 20 minutes late for the appointment, which frustrates you because you told the seller to expect you by 10:30. Your client is completely unaware of your frustration, because showing up 15 minutes late or later is common in much of Asia and Latin America.

38 . Cultural Intelligence

Professors Christopher Earley and Soon Ang defined Cultural Intelligence as the ability to adapt to new cultural settings in their 2003 book of the same name.

People with high CQ aren't experts in every kind of culture. Instead, they excel at understanding unfamiliar or ambiguous behavior. They recognize shared influences among particular groups, and this allows them to identify the impact of a particular culture. However, they also know that cultural influences are complex and interconnected. And they're aware that while culture is significant, factors such as business roles and individual personalities can have a powerful effect on behavior, too.

For example, you schedule a listing appointment with Robert, a Black dentist. Does this person behave the way he does because he is Black, because he is a dentist, or because he is a Black dentist? Or is it because he is a millennial, an introvert, or that he is a new father and was up half the night helping his wife with the baby? It is probably a combination of all of these elements, so you should not make assumptions or generalizations based on any single aspect.

39 . Three Components of CQ

A Harvard Business Review article identified three key components of cultural intelligence (CQ), naming them Head, Body, and Heart. Notice that they have similarities to the four aspects to develop cultural competency: awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills.

Head is the knowledge and understanding that you need cultural intelligence, which comes from observation and research. That will enable you to adapt your decision making and communication.

Body means translating cultural information into skills with visible actions. You show it in your language as well as in your gestures and your body language.

Heart means you need to be self-assured, not afraid to make honest mistakes, and confident enough to keep improving.

People with high CQ use these components to monitor and moderate their actions. Without making quick judgments, or falling back on stereotypes, they can interpret a cultural setting and adjust their behavior accordingly.

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40 . The Advantages of Cultural Intelligence

Improving your Cultural Intelligence helps you to work effectively with anyone who is different from you. When you're working with clients and customers, or interacting with other real estate agents, CQ can prevent you from making a cultural faux pas that can cause upset and embarrassment, or potentially undermine a deal.

Developing your CQ allows you to be attuned to the values, beliefs, and attitudes of people from diverse cultures, and to respond with informed empathy and real understanding.

Individuals with high Cultural Intelligence display four main competencies. These competencies are just not abstract ideas. Social scientists have shown that they map to particular regions of the brain and are predictors of important measures of performance in diverse cultural settings.

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41 . CQ Drive

CQ drive is the motivation to learn about and respond to a different culture. It is the willingness to work with others from diverse backgrounds. It includes an ability to overcome explicit or unconscious bias and the capacity to persist in challenging intercultural settings. When you make the effort to learn about a new culture, your mind starts to open up to new possibilities. Instead of looking difficult to deal with, differences become interesting and exciting.

To strengthen your CQ Drive, do everything you can to explore your new situation. For example:

- Get to know people in different communities and social groups.
- Learn a foreign language – and improve your cross-cultural communication skills in general.

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42 . CQ Knowledge

CQ knowledge is an understanding of culture and cultural differences. It involves more than awareness of variations in language, customs, and appearance. Core cultural differences like values, assumptions, and beliefs are often invisible but cause the most problems—and are frequently overlooked. Cultural knowledge does not necessarily mean that you have to know every detail of a culture. It's about knowing how that culture in general shapes people's behaviors, values, and beliefs. When you understand that, individual "rules" of behavior make much more sense.

Observe how people from diverse cultures interact and pay careful attention to their body language . For example, do specific gestures and facial expressions mean different things to different people? Aim to learn about the history of a culture, too. That way, you won't just learn the "rules" about clothing and food, you'll also know the reasons behind them.

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43 . CQ Strategy

CQ strategy is the ability to not being confined to a single worldview. They are open to new or integrative ideas If you're accustomed to thinking about these differences and their impact, this process can soon become instinctive, and will naturally feed into your planning. To improve CQ strategy question your assumptions about why things happen in different ways in diverse cultures.

44 . CQ Action

The last element of CQ relates to how you behave and, in particular, how you react when things don't go according to plan. CQ action decreases the risk of miscommunication and helps an individual respond to others in a manner that conveys respect and builds trust and rapport. Be sure that your body language is appropriate and is not sending out signals that clash with your words.

But problems or misunderstandings may still arise. If you don't understand why someone is doing or saying something, just ask in a respectful way. Most people will appreciate the interest you are showing in their culture and recognize your desire to do the right thing. However, if you think that you've said or done something wrong, don't be afraid to apologize . Learn from your mistake and remember the right approach next time!

45 . CQ and Differences of Opinion

When you interact with diverse others, there will be times when your own values conflict with the cultural ideals of your partner. Cultural Intelligence does not require you to abandon your own cultural values or to support the practices or beliefs of other cultures. Cultural Intelligence encourages a nonjudgmental respect for difference. This improves your interactions—when people feel respected, they are more likely to reciprocate the favorable sentiment with pro-social behavior and you are more likely to achieve your goals.

Our cultural frameworks are intimately tied to our self-concept. Differences in values, beliefs, and behavioral norms can trigger emotional resistance or backlash.

As a real estate agent, your professionalism as well as your public image are important to your success. So, think first before posting something online that can be construed as biased or actually is prejudiced.

> For this example, let’s use two polarizing topics. Asking two individuals on opposite sides of the abortion or same-sex marriage debate to embrace each other’s viewpoint is likely to be met with anger and frustration or provoke strong arguments against the opposing belief. Attempts at persuasion might even strengthen the intensity of each partners’ point of view. The notion of respect as acceptance, affirmation, or appreciation of different perspectives or ways of being may be too unrealistic.

46 . CQ and Differences of Opinion (cont.)

But neither does respect have to involve reluctant tolerance. Tolerance is a negative term. It implies a gritting of one’s teeth: a quiet endurance of differences privately perceived to be deviant, immoral, or even abhorrent. However, there is the concept of cultural respect that lies midway between complete acceptance and reluctant endurance: civility. **Civility** is respecting the diversity of others. It does not involve endorsing their specific ideas or behavior. Respect as civility means showing a positive regard for others as equals. It involves disagreeing without demonizing and hearing diverse opinions without attacking.

47 . CQ and Civility

The concept of civility is broad. The French and Latin etymologies of the word suggest, roughly, “relating to citizens.” In its earliest use, the term referred to exhibiting good behavior for the good of a community. The early Greeks thought that civility was both a

private virtue and a public necessity, which functioned to hold the state together. Some dictionaries equate civility with respect. So, civility is a behavioral code of decency or respect that is the hallmark of living as citizens in the same state.

Civility is a code of decency that characterizes a civilized society and should be a core element of a real estate licensee's professionalism. Civility is about more than just politeness, although politeness is a necessary first step. It is about disagreeing without disrespect, seeking common ground as a starting point for dialogue about differences, listening past one's preconceptions, and teaching others to do the same.

Civility and respect are present in a brokerage where real estate agents are respectful and considerate in their interactions with one another, as well as with customers, clients, and the public. Respect and civility are based on showing esteem, care, and consideration for others, and acknowledging their dignity. Brokerages characterized by civility and respect have greater positive client and customer interactions.

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48 . Misconceptions About Civility

These are myths and misconceptions about civility. Civility is not: (1) agreement, (2) the absence of criticism, (3) liking a person, and (4) good manners.

Civility is not the same as agreement. The presence of civility does not mean the absence of disagreement. In fact, underlying the codes of civility is the assumption that people will disagree. Professor Stephen Carter of Yale Law School has stated, "[a] nation where everybody agrees is not a nation of civility but a nation without diversity, waiting to die."

Civility is not the absence of criticism. Respect for the other person or party may in fact call for criticism. For example, real estate brokers who fail to point out an error in one of their salesperson's offers isn't being civil – that broker isn't doing his or her job.

Civility is not the same as liking someone. Knowing or liking the other person is not a prerequisite for civility. Civility compels us to show respect even for strangers who may be sharing our space, whether in the office or public areas.

Civility should not be equated with politeness or manners alone. Although impoliteness is almost always uncivil, good manners alone are not a mark of civility. Politely refusing to serve someone at a lunch counter on the basis of skin color, or cordially informing a newly licensed salesperson that the brokerage firm does not have women real estate agents, is not civil behavior.

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49 . Misconceptions About Civility (cont.)

Even with a positive culture of civility and respect in the brokerage, conflicts will arise. When agents are upset, they're more likely to speak thoughtlessly – and when other agents are on the receiving end of someone's anger, it's more likely they will act defensively.

Brokers must have policies in place to manage conflicts before they become completely unmanageable. Additionally, they need to address diversity and inclusion in the workplace, in terms of both training and policies to ensure all agents, employees, clients, and customers are treated with fairness and integrity.

Take the time to think about which groups are the most likely to experience discrimination at work and provide specific support to those workers.

For example, it's important to include diversity and inclusion training surrounding employee groups who are from marginalized or vulnerable groups – such as members of visible ethnic or cultural minorities, as well as members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Real estate agents need to understand the meaning of culture because cultures shape the way people view and interact in the world.

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50 . Summary

This concludes Chapter 3. Below is a brief summary which you can review before taking your quiz.

Real estate agents need to understand the meaning of culture because cultures shape the way people view and interact in the world. **Culture** is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music, and arts that are learned by socialization.

Elements of culture include values, beliefs, norms, symbols, and language. The most important elements of culture may be values and beliefs. The concept of culture typically is described as three layers or levels of culture: international, national, and subculture. These generalizations about layers of culture tend to lead to stereotype groups of people.

International culture refers to cultural traits that extend beyond national boundaries. It is not confined to a country or even a continent. **National culture** is the beliefs, practices, behavior patterns, values, cultural traits, and institutions shared by people in the same nation. **Subcultures** are smaller groups of people who share cultural traits and patterns, but they are a part of the larger society or cultural system.

Ethnocentrism is a belief in the superiority of your own culture. However, when we do not appreciate the diversity of other cultures, we are limited to interpreting the world narrowly through our own cultural filter, which determines what is true and right for us. Any variations are deemed bizarre, wrong, or inferior. The opposite of ethnocentrism is cultural relativism: the judging of cultural elements relative to their cultural context. We are less likely to interpret differences as bizarre, offensive, or deficient if we consider them in terms of their own cultural context.

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51 . Summary (cont.)

Cultural appropriation describes the act of taking over of creative or artistic forms, themes, or practices by one cultural group from another. The line between what differentiates cultural appropriation from cultural appreciation can be controversial. Some say appropriation doesn't exist because no culture is completely original and uninfluenced by any other. Others think that cultural elements shouldn’t be used by anyone else other than the members of that specific culture.

There is no one definition of cultural competence. There is no magic bullet to cultural competency because there are hundreds of cultures and subcultures in this world. However, you can be open to learning about other cultures and be respectful of cultural diversity.

People with cultural competence exhibit a high level of cultural intelligence. **Cultural Intelligence**, also known as “CQ” for cultural quotient, refers to the skill to relate and work effectively in culturally diverse situations. People with cultural intelligence are not simply aware of diverse cultures, they are able to work and relate with people across a variety of cultural contexts.

Civility is a code of decency that characterizes a civilized society and should be a core element of a real estate licensee’s professionalism. Civility is about disagreeing without disrespect, seeking common ground as a starting point for dialogue about differences, listening past one’s preconceptions, and teaching others to do the same.

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52 . Summary (cont.)

Key Terms

Beliefs. The principles that people hold to be true.

Civility. Respecting the diversity of others.

Cross-cultural relationship. The idea that people from diverse cultures can have relationships that acknowledge, respect, and begin to understand each other’s diverse lives.

Cultural appropriation. A term used to describe the act of taking over of creative or artistic forms, themes, or practices by one cultural group from another.

Cultural Intelligence. Refers to the skill to relate and work effectively in culturally diverse situations.

Cultural relativism. The principle of regarding and valuing the practices of a culture from the point of view of that culture and to avoid making hasty judgments.

Culture. The characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people.

Diffusion. The spread of cultural ideas.

Ethnocentrism. The tendency to view your own society or culture as superior and the standard by which other societies and cultures are judged.

Globalization. The integration of markets and diffusion relates to a similar process in the integration of international cultures.

International culture. Cultural traits that extend beyond national boundaries.

Invention is the result of creating something new from existing objects or concepts.

Language. A symbolic system through which people communicate and through which culture is transmitted.

National culture. The beliefs, practices, behavior patterns, values, cultural traits, and institutions shared by people in the same nation.

Norms describe how people are expected to behave in certain situations.

Popular culture. The pattern of cultural experiences and attitudes that exist in mainstream society.

Subcultures. Smaller groups of people who share cultural traits and patterns, but they are a part of the larger society or cultural system.

Symbols. Gestures, signs, objects, signals, and words that help people navigate their environment.

Values A culture's standard for understanding what is good for society and vary from culture to culture.

Click here if you would like to open this summary as a pdf, which you can then print or save to your device: Chapter 3 Summary

Next up, a quiz. Good luck!

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53 . Chapter 3 Quiz